



## NATOURA NATURE TOUR

The exciting treasure hunt in Avelengo, Verano, Meltina and San Genesio

### Beimsteinknott

The porphyry rock of the Beimsteinknott is a geological natural monument. In Verano there are three of these tuff knolls - unique throughout South Tyrol - which were formed in the Permian period around 285 to 275 million years ago. Tschöggberg belongs, in geological terms, to the Bolzano quartz porphyry plate, which covers 2000 square kilometres.

### The Weather Crosses

Weather crosses can be found in many locations throughout South Tyrol when walking and hiking. They are also known as hail crosses or wayside weather crosses. These crosses have been erected for centuries as a form of protection against bad weather, to safeguard homes and farms from storms and natural catastrophes. Weather crosses are still built today, or the old ones replaced, so that no hailstones destroy the crops in the fields or gardens, no storm removes roofs, and also no drought puts the harvest at risk.

### Weiher Bruggen pond

The "Brugger Lacke" wetland is a natural monument and provides an important habitat for a wide variety of animal and plant species. The pond is a popular place to visit with views of the Lfingger, and the Catinaccio/Rosengarten in the Dolomites.

### Haymaking

For centuries haymaking has been part of the local culture and way of life in South Tyrol. As a natural, nutritious cattle fodder, hay is an essential part of everyday life on the farm. And its beneficial effect on people has been valued since time immemorial too. From hay pillows to hay baths - South Tyrolean hay is a source of strength for our wellbeing and health. Where in the 1980s predominantly golden fields of cereals were characteristic of Verano, today, thanks to the dairy industry, they have given way to lush green meadows.

### St. Kathrein

Like many other mountain churches in the Merano region, the Church of St. Kathrein was also built in a location that originally was a pagan place of worship. It is believed that the place in which the little church stands today was once a prehistoric ritual site.

### The Legend of the Church of St. Kathrein

According to legend, the residents of the area wanted to build a Christian church in this location. Two giants offered to help find the stone. At the same time, however, the giants had agreed to build the church at Lafenn (Meltina). What's more, they only had one hammer, which they were henceforth forced to share. So it was hardly surprising that the giants began to fight over the hammer, and that eventually, in a rage, the mayor of Lafenn picked up a giant stone and threw it at St. Kathrein. The boulder did not reach its target, but instead, to the present day, lies below the church in the meadow by the Sulfner.

### Kamper Weiher pond

The route to this pond in its beautiful setting passes farms, through larch meadows and over countless roots, which are characteristic for this hiking trail. A natural oasis where it is well worth spending some time.

### Braided Picket Fences

Wooden post fences are typical of the rural alpine area. A particularly nice example is the braided picket fence - a rural cultural treasure - which for centuries has been used to fence in cottage gardens, meadows and pastures.

The pickets or posts are split from a larch or chestnut trunk, and cut to shape with a point at the top. To increase their lifespan, their lower third is scorched. Crosspieces are made from spruce or larch posts cut in half over which spruce branches are then braided. Building a braided picket fence requires craftsmanship and, in comparison to other types of wooden fence common in South Tyrol, takes longer. In return the braided picket fence is longer lasting and is considered to be an important cultural asset, which as such should be preserved.

## Fahrer Weiher pond

The Fahrer Weiher habitat is one of South Tyrol's protected areas. The small natural oasis is home to a wide variety of species of frog, who converse with one another vociferously, especially on an evening.

### Amphibians in South Tyrol

Amphibians are among the oldest known tetrapod vertebrates. The name "amphibian" comes from the Greek and means "to live a double life". Amphibians live partly in the water and partly on land.

Worldwide there are around 6,000 species, of which only 80 live in Europe, with a dozen (toads, frogs, fire-bellied toads and salamanders) being represented in South Tyrol. They are all dependent on the preservation of bodies of water like the Fahrer Weiher as species-specific habitats, since, due to increasing water pollution, they are among the most endangered classes of animal.

## Stoanerne Mandln

Stacks made from piled up sandstone on the summit of the Hohe Reisch at 2,003 metres above sea level. These rock formations are quite common in high mountain ranges and often serve as signposts in higher regions, and were built by hikers or shepherds as they rested.

Yet the engravings in the stone and the flint tools that were found in this area make the Stoanerne Mandln in Meltina, whose origins in all probability date back to the Stone Age, genuinely unique.

### Legends

The secretive summit figures are shrouded in many myths and legends. If one is to believe the court records passed down from 1540, witches' dances and devil worship took place amongst the stone figures. A certain Barbara Pachler had to stand trial for having met with demons and witches up there. To the present day the area around the Stoanerne Mandln radiates an undeniably mysterious magic - the magnificent view from the 2,000 metre high mountain plays its part in this.

## The Salten - Europe's biggest larch plateau

A few steps above San Genesio extends the Salten with its uniquely lovely larch meadows. It is home to the largest continuous stand of larches in Europe.

### The larches and their special features

In the Alps a great deal of ecological and economic importance is attached to the larch. Folk medicine and modern herbal medicine have long recognised the benefits of this tree. In days gone by the farmers collected the resin of the larch, known as "Loerget" by drilling horizontally into the tree around 20 cm above ground. To make sure that the tree was not damaged, they sealed the hole with a stopper. Once or twice a year they collected the resin from the trunk with a turning rod. The "Loerget" was a much sought-after natural remedy with which splinters could be removed from the skin, or cows treated for rheumatism. The wood of the larch is also extremely weather resistant, which is why the local saying goes: "A Larch unterm Doch isch a ewige Soch" (a roof made of larch is an eternal thing).

## Earth pyramids

The Wieser Lahn is the place where the Margarethenbach stream rises, which flows downhill here into the Val d'Adige/Etschtal Valley in Settequerce/Siebeneich. The red loamy soil of the large landslide area stands out from the green meadows and forests, and the earth pyramids are clearly prominent. An incomparable natural spectacle!

### Stone witnesses to the last Ice Age

The famous earth pyramids probably came about over the course of the centuries due to erosion and facilitated by the climatic conditions - the change between rainy and dry periods and the sheltered location. Erosion phenomena of this kind are primarily found where Ice Age glaciers deposited moraine clay in the valleys. The dry, rock-hard material combined with water becomes a loamy mush and flows into the valley. Steep walls form. If a large rock is embedded in the loam, this protects the material lying beneath it from rain, and it thus remains dry and hard. This is how the earth pyramids are formed, which in some places rise up to 30 metres into the sky.